

## **FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2017

**Agenda Item:** Brucellosis Audit

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Informational

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 20 Min

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### **Background**

Brucellosis is a disease of concern for livestock interests and is present in elk and bison in parts of FWP regions 3 and 5. This area in southwest Montana is within the Designated Surveillance Area (DSA) as defined by the Montana Department of Livestock (DoL). Both FWP and DoL are involved with brucellosis, each agency acting within its statutory authority. Bison management by both FWP and DoL is guided by the Interagency Bison Management Plan and its associated adaptive process. Brucellosis in elk is addressed by annual work plans adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. With respect to brucellosis, management of bison and elk focuses on separation from cattle at critical times of the year when the risk of brucellosis transmission is greatest.

In 2016 the Legislative Audit Division conducted a performance audit of both FWP and DoL. Specific to FWP the audit was to determine the role of the Department in responding to the presence of brucellosis in wildlife, and if the resulting responsibilities are carried out according to a defined, documented process.

Ultimately the audit directed one recommendation to FWP as stated below.

*We recommend the Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks seek legislation and adopt administrative rules that:*

- A. Clearly define the responsibilities of the Department for providing brucellosis mitigation assistance to landowners and the eligibility criteria landowners must meet to receive assistance.*
- B. Define and implement specific program policies that provide guidance on consistently carrying out and documenting brucellosis response actions.*

With respect to this one audit recommendation the Department partially concurred. While FWP believes existing products and process already provide considerable guidance relative to landowner eligibility and consistent implementation and reporting, there is value in additional clarification. However, that additional clarity can be established through a combination of administrative rule making and the existing annual review process and Commission rule. Such clarifications would first appear at the conclusion of the next annual review by the Commission in fall 2017.

The audit and FWP's response were presented to the Legislative Audit committee on February 16, 2017.